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INVENTORY OF THE PARISH ARCHIVES

Inventory of the Parish Archives  
of Louisiana

Prepared by  
The Historical Records Survey  
Division of Professional and Service Projects  
Work Projects Administration

No. 26. JEFFERSON PARISH (GRETN)

A Brief History

*Prepared by*  
THE HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY  
DIVISION OF PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROJECTS  
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES  
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY





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OF LOUISIANA

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No. 26. JEFFERSON PARISH (GRETN) A Brief History

University, Louisiana  
The Department of Archives  
Louisiana State University  
April, 1940





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The Historical Records Survey

Sargent Child, Director  
John C. L. Andreassen,  
Regional and State Supervisor  
Vergil L. Bedsole, Supervisor

Division of Professional and Service Projects

Florence Kerr, Assistant Commissioner  
Leo G. Spofford, Chief Regional Supervisor  
Alma S. Hammond, State Director

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

F. C. Harrington, Commissioner  
Lawrence Westbrook, Regional Director  
James H. Crutcher, State Administrator





## PREFACE

"A Brief History of Jefferson Parish" prepared by the Louisiana Historical Records Survey Project was published in the Jefferson Parish Yearly Review, 1939, pp. 127-183. A check of depositories to which this printed volume was to have been mailed indicated that most of the designated libraries did not have a copy. Since the Yearly Review is now out of print, and since the "Brief History" was not included in the Inventory of Parish Archives of Louisiana No. 26, Jefferson Parish (Gretna), University, Louisiana, January 1940, it has been reissued in mimeographed form as a supplement to the Jefferson Parish Inventory.

John C. L. Andreassen  
Regional and State Supervisor  
WPA Historical Records Survey Projects.

March 25, 1940  
300 Old Criminal Courts Building  
Tulane and Saratoga Streets  
New Orleans, Louisiana





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## A BRIEF HISTORY

of

## JEFFERSON PARISH

### The Historical Records Survey (1)

Jefferson Parish is located in southeastern Louisiana. It extends from Lake Pontchartrain to the Gulf of Mexico, and touches the parishes of Orleans and Plaquemines on the east, and St. Charles and Lafourche on the west. The Mississippi River flows through the northern corner, dividing the parish into two sections, the left bank, between the river and the lake, and the right bank, from the river to the gulf. Jefferson was created in 1825 from the Parish of Orleans, (2) and named in honor of Thomas Jefferson. At that time the parish included the greater portion of present uptown New Orleans beyond Felicite Street. As the city expanded, the Jefferson line was pushed back bit by bit until today it lies approximately along Monticello Avenue and the old protection levee to the lake.

From north to south, the parish affords a striking contrast. That part on the left bank adjoining New Orleans, consisting of 28,000 acres of fertile land, is a thickly populated suburb. Here is located Metairie, with its beautiful homes and gardens; Harahan and Kenner, busy incorporated towns; while along the new four-lane highway to Baton Rouge stretches an almost continuous line of farms, dairies and homes. Connecting this section with the west bank of the Mississippi is the new Huey P. Long Bridge, its lofty arches visible for many miles. This is the only trans-Mississippi bridge south of Vicksburg, although one is presently under construction near Baton Rouge. Across the river, Gretna, Marrero, Harvey and Westwego are manufacturing and shipping centers for nationally known products. From here, however, the picture changes. As the road turns southward toward the Gulf, it passes through the lovely Barataria country, with its spreading oaks and winding bayous, its busy little communities of shrimping and fishing folk. Finally, at the southern end of the parish, the long miles of coastal marshes end. Here only trappers and fishermen are found. Beyond the mainland, Grand Isle, eight miles long by one mile wide, offers fishing and surf bathing equalled in few places.

To understand Jefferson Parish as it is today it is necessary to go back nearly three hundred years to April 9, 1682. For two months, Robert Cavelier de La Salle had been struggling with the dangerous and uncharted currents of the Mississippi River, intent on one idea, to traverse the entire course of the mighty river from source to mouth. Indians, famine and sickness had pursued his little band. Now at last, on this day in April, he came to the end of his voyage, where the river merged into the Gulf, "limitless, voiceless and lonely, without a sign of life". There he erected a cross and buried a leaden plate, claiming, in the name of Louis the Grand, King of France, all the country drained by the Mississippi from the headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf





of Mexico. La Salle was killed five years later, by one of his own men, but he left as an heritage the French claims to the colony of Louisiana. (3)

Others followed the trails he had blazed. Bienville, Iberville, and St. Denis explored the rivers seeking places for trading posts. Biloxi was settled by Bienville in 1699, Natchitoches by St. Denis in 1714. New Orleans was established by Bienville in 1718, and in 1723 became the capital of Louisiana. France lost Louisiana to Spain in 1763. In 1800, by a secret treaty, Spain gave Louisiana back to France, and in 1803 Napoleon sold it to the United States for \$ 15,000,000. (4)

Orleans, the first county created after the Louisiana Purchase, comprised all that portion of Louisiana lying on both sides of the Mississippi River from the Balize (at the mouth of the river), to the Parish of St. Charles. (5) Thus, Orleans County incorporated all the territory included in the present parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard and Plaquemines. On March 31, 1807, the Orleans Territorial Legislature revoked the original twelve counties, and created instead nineteen parishes, retaining the term county only for purposes of representation and taxation until 1845. (6) Two of these new parishes, St. Bernard and Plaquemines, were taken from Orleans. All of the remaining territory of Orleans County became Orleans Parish. (7) By a provision of the Constitution of 1812, the City of New Orleans, extending from the Canal des Pêcheurs to the Nums' Plantation (Felicity Street), constituted the second senatorial district. The remainder of Orleans Parish, extending from the Nums' Plantation to St. Charles Parish and Lake Pontchartrain on the left bank of the Mississippi River, and on the right bank from the river to the Gulf of Mexico, formed the third senatorial district. (8) It was this part of Orleans Parish which in 1825 became Jefferson Parish.

### EARLY SETTLEMENTS

Many of the present population of the parish are descendants of the French colonists who came to Louisiana during the eighteenth century. The earliest land grants in the section go back to 1719. In that year the Western Company, to whom King Louis XIV had leased the province for purposes of trade and colonization, granted to Bienville an immense tract of land above New Orleans, from Bienville Street to the "Tchoupitoulas", and another tract on the opposite side of the river. Following the royal decree prohibiting the officers of the company from holding land other than "vegetable gardens", Bienville let out in concessions all of his land except a "garden" on the right bank, and one between Bienville and the present Felicity streets. These concessions and subsequent sales of property to settlers formed the basis of the plantations which grew up along the river. (9)

Twelve miles above New Orleans was the tract known as the Tchoupitoulas Plantation, the site of a Tchoupitoulas Indian village. The first grant of this land was to Nicholas de Boisclair before 1743. Parts of it passed by sale to Pierre Picquery, Jean Arnault, Bernard Marigny, and in 1808 was purchased by Joseph Soniat du Fossat. Today





there are about one hundred and sixteen acres still in the possession of Meloney C. Soniat. The rest of the plantation is occupied by the Harahan School, the Sugar Planters Association, two dairies, the Colonial Realty Company, and the Colonial Golf and Country Club. Parts have been subdivided into Markham Heights, Soniat Place, Roseland Park, Riverside Park and River Front Farms. (10)

The old colonial home of the Soniat family was built over a hundred years ago by Joseph Soniat du Fossat. The house was situated in the middle of the plantation, and about six hundred feet from the river. It was a two-story brick building with large galleries entirely surrounding the house, these galleries being supported by large brick pillars. The bricks used in the construction of the house were made on the place, for du Fossat had his own brick-yard. The timber and the lumber were cut from his cypress swamp; the wooden rafters and beams were hewn on the place and are held together by wooden pegs. Today, this building still stands, and is the home of the Colonial Golf and Country Club. The club bought two hundred acres of the plantation and remodeled the mansion by adding a wing at each end of the colonnaded veranda and installing locker rooms and a grill. (11)

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAUBOURGS

Following the line of the river, these plantations developed first into faubourgs (suburbs), usually taking the name of the former owner, (12) then into a series of incorporated towns, each destined to be absorbed by the growing City of New Orleans. By 1810 so many people desired homes in this section that the large land owners decided to divide their holdings into lots which could be sold to new settlers.

The first to develop was the Faubourg Nuns, located approximately between the present Felicity and St. Andrew Streets. This property was bought by the Ursuline Nuns in 1770 and 1780 from the Livaudais estate, and used by them as a farm until its subdivision in 1810. (13) Above the Nuns' Plantation, and extending to the present First Street, was the Faubourg Lafayette, known as the Wiltz tract. This tract was divided into lots and opened for sale in 1813, but no specific name was assigned to the faubourg. (14) In 1825 the Marquis de la Fayette visited New Orleans and made such a favorable impression that the new faubourg was called in his honor Faubourg Lafayette. (15)

The tide of expansion swept on past the Faubourg Lafayette. Just above lay the extensive plantation of the Livaudais family. The title to this plantation originated with Francois de Livaudais in 1736. When his grandson Jacques married Marie Celeste Marigny, the combined holdings comprised practically all of what is now "uptown" New Orleans. They were building a new mansion on their sugar plantation in the section now bounded by Washington, Tchoupitoulas, Sixth streets and the river, when the flood of 1816 inundated the section. The house was never completed, and remained for many years a place of mystery, pointed out as the "haunted house". The plantation, however, was greatly enhanced in value by a deposit of rich alluvial soil which raised the land several feet. In 1832 Mrs. Livaudais sold her land as far as Harmony Street to a group of speculators, who called their new suburb Faubourg Livaudais.





About 1840 wealthy Americans began moving into the faubourg, where they built handsome homes surrounded by spacious gardens. This marked the beginning of a residential section which even today is famous as the "Garden District". (16)

#### CITY OF LAFAYETTE

On April 1, 1833, the faubourgs Nums, Lafayette and Livaudais were incorporated as the City of Lafayette. (17) Within ten years the government had progressed from a board and president, controlled by the police jury, to a council and mayor. (18) In 1844 the faubourg Delassize was annexed to Lafayette, and in 1848 the limits of the city were extended to the present Toledano Street. (19) But New Orleans also was expanding in the same direction, and in 1847, some of the lower portion of Lafayette was added to the city. Legally, however, the boundaries between Jefferson and Orleans were not changed, and the parts annexed were allowed to remain in Jefferson. Even in 1852, when the City of Lafayette was formally annexed to New Orleans, it continued to be the parish seat of Jefferson, until the constitution of 1852 extended the limits of the Parish of Orleans so as to include the City of Lafayette. The constitution also provided that until a new apportionment should be made according to the new census Lafayette should vote for senators as from the parish of Orleans, and should elect two out of the three representatives apportioned to Jefferson. (20)

In 1850, Lafayette had a population of 14,190, of which about thirteen per cent were colored. The following year the city made two appropriations which greatly influenced the future development of the entire section; one, a warrant for \$166.70 as Lafayette's proportion of a proposed survey for the New Orleans and Jackson Railroad, which has since become the southern end of the Illinois Central Lines; the other, a subscription of \$200 for the Algiers and Opelousas Railroad, which in turn became the New Orleans end of the Southern Pacific. (21)

The city proper, being a river town, was located near the water front, where the German and Irish settlers were in the majority. Even today that part of New Orleans between Thalia Street and Seventh Street, and from Magazine Street to the river, is locally called the "Irish Channel".

#### CITY OF JEFFERSON

Immediately beyond the City of Lafayette was situated the "Borough of Freeport", which was incorporated May 27, 1846. Its boundary ran through the area which at present lies between State and Webster Streets. In 1847 the line was extended to Joseph Street, the lower limits of the settlement of Hurtsville. On March 9, 1850, the "Borough of Freeport" was absorbed by the incorporation of the City of Jefferson, composing the following faubourgs: Plaisance, Delachaise, St. Joseph, East and West Bouligny. (22) Twenty years later, on March 16, 1870, New Orleans annexed the City of Jefferson. (23)

Hurstville and the subdivisions Bloomingdale and Burtheville formed the greater portion of the plantation formerly owned by Jean





Etienne de Bore, who in 1794 was the first person to succeed in crystalizing sugar in Louisiana. Audubon Park contains about two arpents of the land originally owned by de Bore. The remainder of the park was purchased by the City of New Orleans in 1871 from the Foucher estate. The rear of the Foucher property from St. Charles Avenue back is now occupied by Loyola University, Tulane University and Audubon Place. (24)

#### CITY OF CARROLLTON

The most important of the towns above New Orleans was Carrollton. Before the Civil War it was regarded as a summer resort by the people of New Orleans. Its fine hotel and garden were situated on the river side of the New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad Company's station, and were bounded by St. Charles and Carrollton Avenues, Madison and Levee Streets. The depot surpassed any of those in the City of New Orleans. The hotel, depot and garden have long since disappeared owing to the encroachments of the river and the Public Belt Railroad. Incidentally, Carrollton is the only one of the early towns of Jefferson Parish which, as a part of New Orleans, has retained its former name. (25)

The land on which Carrollton now stands was known as the Macarty sugar plantation. The previous history of the tract is so complicated and indefinite that historians disagree on many points of the succession. It was part of a grant made to Bienville in 1719, and was transferred by him to Nicholas Chauvin de la Freniere "at the quit-rent of six livres of rent per arpent, as also two capons and two days labor for each of the said arpents". (26) At the father's death, the plantation apparently passed to his son, Nicholas de la Freniere, Jr. Nicholas Chauvin de la Freniere was executed by O'Reilly for his part in the rebellion of 1768. The next owner was Louis Cesaire LeBreton, son-in-law of the elder la Freniere. Whether he inherited the property, or as another story goes, had received it in 1757 as a grant from the French government, appears unknown. It is equally uncertain just how it came into the Macarty family. According to one source, LeBreton sold it to Barthelemy Macarty on January 21, 1781. Another version claims that it passed to his son, and upon his murder, it became the property of Barthelemy Macarty, the tutor of the LeBreton children. The title to the lands, however, as confirmed by Congress in 1823, was based on a Spanish grant to Jean Baptiste Macarty, son of Barthelemy Macarty, in 1795. (27)

The plantation, consisting of thirty-two arpents on the Mississippi River, and extending between the present limits of Upperline and Lowerline Streets, was in cultivation in 1808 by the Macarty family as a sugar plantation. In 1831 the entire tract was sold by the heirs to the New Orleans Canal and Banking Company, and Laurent Millaudon, John Slidell and Samuel Kohn. These parties, acting as an association, in 1833 employed Charles Zimple, a surveyor, to lay the plantation out in lots and squares. They named the embryo town after General William Carroll, who, with a large force of Tennessee militia, enroute to the Battle of New Orleans, had encamped in 1814 on the plantation. The town was incorporated on March 10, 1845, and became the City of Carrollton in 1850. (29) The city extended its limits in 1872 to take in all the territory between Lowerline Street and Labarre Road, in Jefferson Parish. (30)





The first house in Carrollton was built by Samuel Short in 1834 or 1835. The first brick store was built in 1843 by Mr. Christian Winters, a German. The first newspaper, THE CARROLLTON STAR, was published in 1849 by P. Souliar. This paper was issued for only a short time and went out of existence, but was re-issued in 1851. (31) In 1863 Mr. Souliar started publication of the CARROLLTON TIMES, which was published semi-weekly until 1868, when it was made a weekly. About 1871 or 1872 he ceased publication of the TIMES, but in 1873 issued THE CARROLLTON SENTINEL. On November 5, 1873, it was made the official journal of the City of Carrollton by the mayor and the city council. When Carrollton was added to New Orleans the offices of the paper were moved to Gretna and the name became THE JEFFERSON SENTINEL. The paper was usually non-partisan, but in the campaign of 1876, when Louisiana became the center of Congressional investigation, THE JEFFERSON SENTINEL strongly advocated Hayes and Wheeler in the national political field, and backed H. C. Warmoth for the Republican nomination for the governor of Louisiana. (32)

The New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad was one of the first street railroads constructed in the country, preceded in the South only by the Pontchartrain Railroad. The railroad was chartered in 1833 and had the privilege of extending to Baton Rouge. (33) The line began at Lee Circle, then called Tivoli Circle, and ran out Mayades Street (now St. Charles Avenue), to First Street in Carrollton. Along the route were small railroad stations: City of Lafayette at Jackson Avenue, Jefferson City at Louisiana Avenue, Bouligny at Napoleon Avenue, Burtheville at Henry Clay Avenue and Greenville at Broadway. The City of Carrollton also had another railroad, called the Jefferson and Lake Pontchartrain Railroad Company, which was incorporated in 1840, by an act of the Legislature. This railroad operated only in Jefferson Parish, from Carrollton to Lake Pontchartrain; it ran along Levee Street to Protection Levee, thence to Lake Pontchartrain in the neighborhood of Buck Town (now East End), where the company had its wharves. There the steamers from across the lake and even those from Mobile would dock. This road was finally absorbed by the Carrollton Railroad. (34)

The rapid growth of New Orleans made the annexation of Carrollton almost inevitable. When the bill was first introduced into the legislature in January, 1874, numerous protests came from the citizens, who feared that property would decrease in value, assessments would increase, and that depreciated Carrollton bonds would be used for speculation. Gradually the opposition died. THE CARROLLTON SENTINEL, which led the fight against annexation, changed sides on March 21, 1874 and came out strongly in favor of it. On March 26, the whole city delegation from New Orleans rode up to the Carrollton City Hall, where they received from Mr. Brice, ex-mayor, the archives and the property of the city. When Carrollton was annexed to New Orleans, the upper limits were dropped back to Monticello Street, where they remain today. Today, Carrollton is one of the most beautiful sections of New Orleans. (35)

#### POLICE JURY

When Jefferson was created in 1825, twelve commissioners were appointed to divide the parish into twelve districts. These commissioners





were Lucien LaBranche, La. Dussau, Jean Baptiste Le Breton, J. Holliday, F. B. de Labarre, L. Volant Labarre, Francois Dorville, D. Villars, L. Dussuau de Lacroix, Joseph Verloin and Felix Delery. (36) On January 30, 1834, an act was approved to organize and define the authority, duties and function of the Police Jury of the Parish of Jefferson, and "that the Police Jury of the Parish of Jefferson shall be constituted and composed of not less than eight, nor more than twelve members". (37) In 1938, the City of Lafayette was denied representation on the police jury, and the authority of the police jury could no longer be exercised within its limits. The president and board of council of Lafayette were empowered to exercise within the limits of the city all the powers heretofore vested in the police jury, in addition to the authority already granted. (38) As a consequence of this act, the Police Jury of Jefferson divided the parish into ten wards, each one of which was to elect one member to the jury in accordance with existing laws. (39)

By an act of March 7, 1856, each village in the parish was authorized to elect three commissioners of public works to act within the respective limits of each village. These commissioners were to make annual statements to the police jury. In this same year the police jury was delegated to appoint a parish committee, "the basis of representation to be in the proportion of the state taxes assessed in the respective limits of each corporation. Each corporation entitled to at least one member in said committee." The duty of this committee was to determine and fix the pro rata of contribution of each corporation towards the expenditures which by law bear upon the whole parish, and to examine all bills or claims set up against the parish and report upon them to the several councils and police jury. (40) In 1857 the police jury was authorized to open roads through private property, but this act was repealed the following year. (41)

In 1858, because of differences which developed within the police jury, two police jury districts were created for the parish, divided as follows: "All that portion...lying on the right bank of the river Mississippi shall constitute one police jury district, to be known under the name and style of 'Police Jury of Jefferson, Right Bank'...all that portion of the parish...situated on the left bank of the river Mississippi, with the exception of the two corporations known as the 'City of Jefferson' and 'Town of Carrollton', shall form and constitute another police jury district, to be known by the name and style of 'Police Jury of Jefferson, Left Bank'". (42)

In 1859 the police jury, left bank, was authorized to borrow money for the construction of shell roads, and to issue bonds therefor. (43) The following year the police jury, left bank, was authorized to divide the parish, left bank, into school districts and to appoint school directors for the same, and to make regulations concerning schools. (44) On December 3, 1860, the police jury, right bank, "in view of the present political convulsion agitating the country," appropriated the sum of \$1,000 for the use of the military company known as the "Jefferson Rangers". An amendment was also passed giving \$500 to each infantry or artillery company that might be organized in the parish. On the same day Captain J. G. Dreux, commander of the "Jefferson Rifles",





left bank, asked for the support of the different municipal corporations, and permission to use the courthouse as an armory. (45) In October, 1861, the police jury subscribed \$4,000 to aid in the construction of a fort at Little Temple (on Boutte Island), to protect the lower Barataria region, and cut off all communications with the blockading squadrons through these outlets. (46) In 1861, the police jury, left bank, was given the power to have delinquent taxes recorded as a lien and privilege on the property of the delinquent. They were also authorized to pass laws regulating improvements in the villages of the left bank. (47)

During Reconstruction the power of the police jury was superseded by that of the Metropolitan Police, which in 1868 placed the parish in the power of five commissioners, three of them negroes. During their regime of ten years they held undisputed control over the police jury and over the finances of the parish. (48) In 1877, following the defeat of Governor Kellogg and the installation of Francis Nichols as governor, the Metropolitan Police was abolished by the legislature, and the Jefferson Parish Police Jury resumed control of its own affairs. (49) One of the first acts of the restored parish government was to oust the officials of the Metropolitan Police and to repudiate the warrants issued by them against the police jury. In October, 1879, a report in the minutes of the police jury declared the claim of one L. Roche, for the sum of \$712.00, invalid, and "no longer an obligation against the parish." A month later the police jury drew money from "the fund known as the Metropolitan Police Fund" to defray expenses of the sheriff and to run the district term of court. (50)

The police juries of the state, with the exception of those of Jefferson and Orleans, were reorganized in 1871, and the governor authorized to appoint, with the advice and consent of the senate, five police jurors to hold office until the election of 1872, at which time five members were to be elected in each parish, for a term of two years. (51) Two years later this act was amended and made applicable to Jefferson Parish, but the two police juries were to remain as set up by previous legislation. (52) In 1876 an act was passed empowering the police jury, right bank, to issue interest bearing bonds in lieu of and in liquidation of outstanding liabilities. (53)

In 1884 the legislature abolished the police juries, right and left bank, and consolidated the parish under one parochial government, styled "The Police Jury of the Parish of Jefferson". The parish was divided, by this act, into nine police jury wards. (54) Another act of 1884 repealed all acts creating commissions of public works and other offices of villages and unincorporated towns. Villages and unincorporated towns were to return to the control of the parish. (55) The same legislation which provided for the consolidation of the parochial government of Jefferson also empowered the governor to appoint an additional juror for each ward with a population of 5,000 inhabitants, and one more for each additional 5,000 inhabitants or part thereof in excess of 2,500. The additional jurors were to be selected from the registered voters of the ward. (56) Under the authority of acts similar to those of 1880 and 1882 the governor continued to appoint the successors to the police jury until 1896. (57) Control over local affairs was made possible by an act of 1894 which





provided that the election of police jurors be resumed in all the parishes, except New Orleans, at the general election to be held in April, 1896, and at each general election thereafter, i. e., every four years. (58)

Since 1908, Jefferson and other parishes with a population of less than 50,000 have been entitled to elect an additional police juror in those wards where there are more than 5,000 inhabitants, and one more for each additional 5,000 or part thereof in excess of 2,500 inhabitants. The provisions of this act entitle Wards Three and Eight to two police jurors each, and Ward Four to four, making a total of fourteen police jurors for the nine wards of the parish. (59) In the last decade the police jury has been permitted to advertise its resources and other advantages by publication and radio. (60)

At the time Jefferson Parish was established, the candidate for membership to the police jury was required to be a respectable inhabitant, and a freeholder in the parish. (61) In 1829, candidates for this office were required to have the same qualifications as members of the State House of Representatives. (62) Since 1894, candidates must, in addition to the above, be able to read and write, and own in his own right, or his wife own in her own right, property of an assessed value of at least \$250 in the parish. (63) This assessed value must be on the assessment roll at the time of the general election or the candidate is not eligible. (64)

#### PARISH SEAT

The first parish seat was established at Lafayette in 1825, (65) but was removed to the City of Carrollton in 1852, when Lafayette was annexed to the Parish of Orleans. (66) In 1858, when the state Legislature created two distinct police juries within the parish, the two police juries, the officials of the City of Jefferson and the Town of Carrollton, all held their meetings at the courthouse in Carrollton. (67) In 1874, when the City of Carrollton was annexed to New Orleans, the seat of the parish was moved across the river to Harvey, where Harvey's Castle, built in 1844 by Captain Joseph Hale Harvey, served as the courthouse. (68) It was resolved on May 7, 1884 to move the courthouse, parish offices and records from Harvey to William Tell Hall in Gretna. (69) On April 4, 1876, a bill was introduced to the police jury for the sale of the courthouse in Carrollton, the proceeds of the sale to be divided forty-five per cent to New Orleans, thirty-seven per cent to Jefferson Parish, Right Bank, and eighteen per cent to Jefferson Parish, Left Bank. The sale was not reported until 1890, Jefferson receiving \$ 4,312.00 as her share. (70) This building, on Carrollton Avenue, was occupied from 1855 to 1874 by the administrative offices of the city and parish. (71) Today it is the McDonogh No. 23 grammar school. In 1906 the police jury was empowered to dispose of the the courthouse on the corner of Newton and Third Streets, In Gretna, and a new courthouse was built at its present location on Huey P. Long Avenue. (72)





## BOUNDARIES

Jefferson Parish has had many boundary changes. The first act of creation gave no definite limits to the parish except those already prescribed in the Constitution of 1812 for the "third senatorial district above Muns Plantation". It has already been shown how Lafayette, Jefferson City and Carrollton were incorporated with New Orleans. Several other acts clarified the existing boundaries, but made no changes. (73) On August 6, 1890, in view of "considerable uncertainty as to the exact location of the boundary line between the parishes of Orleans and Jefferson from the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain", the police jury "for the sake of harmonious relations of the government of the two parishes", resolved to employ a surveyor on the part of Jefferson. (74) This survey was completed in 1892, and recognized by the City of New Orleans. (75)

Recently the discovery of oil in the marshes of the Gulf region has brought about a dispute between Jefferson and Lafourche over the possession of Grand Isle, Hackberry Bay and Cheniere Caminada. Lafourche Parish bases its claim on the act of 1824 which states that "half of the Pass Monidon as far as the sea, including the Grand Isle, shall constitute the eastern boundary of the Parish of Lafourche, any law to the contrary notwithstanding". (76) Jefferson Parish, however, claims that the two subsequent acts of 1827 and 1830 abrogates the earlier act by specifically placing both Grand Isle and Cheniere Caminada in this parish. (77) Moreover, in the revised statutes of 1852, the boundary of Jefferson is given as "a line which is not definitely defined, but includes the Cheniere Caminada and Grand Isle, separating the said Parish of Jefferson from the Parish of Lafourche Interior, to the Gulf of Mexico." (78) Each parish has appointed a committee to examine the respective claims and report on them June 15, 1939, at Des Allemands. (79)

## POPULATION GROWTH

The earliest census of the parish, in 1830, showed 6,846 persons. (80) From that time until 1850 the population increased steadily, (81) but between 1850 and 1860 there was a loss of 10,000 which can be attributed to the annexation of the City of Lafayette to New Orleans. (82) There was further decrease between 1870 and 1880, due to the annexation of the City of Jefferson and the City of Carrollton to New Orleans. (83) Since that time the number of inhabitants of Jefferson has been increasing, doubling between the years 1920 and 1930, when the figures for the latter year showed 40,032 inhabitants. (84) The Parish officials believe that the population today is at least 45,000.

## TAXES AND ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUES

The total taxes collected for the year 1877, one of the earliest records available, amounted to \$14,979.63. (85) Due to the growth of the parish in population and to its recognition as a commercial center, which has brought in many large corporations, the tax receipts rose, until in 1937, the real and personal, state and local taxes amounted to





\$1,012,525.56. (86) The total assessed property value for 1938 amounted to \$29,586,759.00, an increase of \$711,542 over the 1937 evaluation. (87)

### AREA SOIL

Jefferson has an area of 426 square miles. (88) All of the lower part of the parish is coastal marsh, and the entire parish is alluvial, formed by the sediment brought down by the Mississippi. The highest and most productive land is near the banks of the Mississippi River and the bayous from which it slopes off into wooded swamps. There, the principal forest growth is cypress, ash, hickory, sap gum and tupelo. (89) The alluvial soil is fertile, and at present more than 4,000 acres of Class A lands are under cultivation for truck crops. Proximity to New Orleans insures a market for practically everything raised, while excellent transportation facilities, combined with a long growing season, enable farmers to ship their products in early spring and late fall. (90)

### PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

In 1937, income from cattle and dairy products alone amounted to \$113,357. Jefferson's 273 dairies produce approximately 2,500,000 gallons of milk annually. Practically seventy-five per cent of the dairy-men are now raising their own stock, and about fifty per cent have substituted home-grown feed for commercial feed, resulting in an appreciable saving. In conjunction with dairying and agriculture, the farmers are finding poultry and swine raising profitable side lines. All the feed needed for these enterprises can be supplied by culled inferior vegetables, surplus grain and skim milk. (92)

Before and for some time after the Civil War, the cultivation of sugar cane was the most important industry of the section, until Mosaic disease almost destroyed the cane crop of Louisiana. With the introduction of Mosaic resistant varieties of cane, however, the industry has revived somewhat in the parish, and sugar cane is again being grown on a commercial scale near the St. Charles-Jefferson line. (93)

Another agricultural enterprise of the Parish is floral culture. Many florists sell their products in New Orleans, while others ship them to points in the north. Along with this has come the successful production of lily-bulbs. The industry in Jefferson Parish has been greatly advanced by the experiments of Dr. Julian Miller in disease resistant varieties. (94)

Fish are plentiful, and the shrimp and oyster industry is of considerable importance, especially around Barataria Bay. Manila Village is a typical shrimping settlement, where the sole activity is the drying of shrimp for marketing. Philippine immigrants originally settled here, and their descendants still speak a Spanish patois. Another shrimping village is Bassa Bassa, where the majority of the population is Chinese. The shallow waters of the lower parish have just the proper salinity for the growth of oysters, and in 1937 produced 63,343 barrels. (95) Another industry of local importance is the marketing





of soft-shell crabs. At Fleming Canal Store on Big Bayou Barataria, Felix Favalora operates a crab exchange where more than 300 families bring their catches for sale. Some of the crabs are shipped alive to New Orleans, others are packed in ice for shipment to points all over the United States. (96) just beyond the city limits of New Orleans, at Shrewsbury, is located a factory for the canning of frog legs. Trapping of muskrat, mink, otter, raccoon and opossum gives employment to hundreds of trappers during the winter months. (97)

In recent years the parish has become one of the most highly industrialized centers of southern Louisiana, with many large manufacturing plants in operation throughout the year. Today, more than fifty-five per cent of all products manufactured in and shipped from the Port of New Orleans are manufactured on the right bank of the Mississippi River in Jefferson Parish. The reasons for this growth are obvious. The area across the river is a natural distribution point. As a part of the Port of New Orleans, large vessels may dock in the harbor. It also has seven trunkline railroad lines and access to Gulf ports by the Intracoastal Canal. There is enough land to permit establishment and future development of large plants, plentiful labor, and a low tax rate for industry. Here is located the main plant of The Celotex Corporation, which makes wall board from sugar cane bagasse, fibre residue left after the juice has been squeezed from the cane. The plant has expanded until it now covers 140 acres. (98)

Oil was discovered near Lafitte in 1933, and the first well brought in by The Texas Company, in May, 1935. The company now has a large gasoline plant at Lafitte. This is one of the most consistent oil reserves in Louisiana. Thirty wells have been bored, of which only one was a dry hole. (99) In 1937 there were 3,847,930 barrels of oil taken out of this Jefferson field. (100)

## SOCIAL PROBLEMS

During the first hundred years of the parish's existence, social problems were referred to only incidentally by the police jury. The parish did, however consider itself responsible for the burial of paupers, transportation of the poor sick to the state hospital, and for a certain amount of direct aid to indigent persons. (101) In 1860, twenty years before the passage of any state law, the police jury authorized its president to take care of a sick pauper. As a means of preventing the parish from supporting a large pauper population, the police jury granted free licenses to widows, widows with children, and to infirm persons for the privilege of running small general stores or peddling goods. (102)

Recognition of the desirability of caring for dependent children in their own homes caused the establishment in 1921 of a widows' and orphans' pension by the police jury. These pensions were customarily for a definite amount over a stated period of time, as thirty-five dollars for six months, or twenty-five dollars for one year. There is no mention of any supervision of the families receiving this fund, nor of any qualifications as to who should receive money from the fund. (103) By a resolution passed in 1932 the \$2,000 budgeted for the paupers is





pro-rated among the fourteen members of the police jury to aid widows and orphans residing in their respective wards. (104) At present the police jury and the Department of Public Welfare, supplemented by government agencies, takes care of the relief cases of the parish. (105)

Care of orphans began in 1834, when the police jury ordered all fines collected from its members for non-attendance or refusal to serve when elected to be turned over to the orphan boys' asylum in Jefferson Parish. (106)

Hope Haven Farm, a Catholic orphanage and training school for boys from the age of ten to manhood, is on Barataria Road a mile and a half beyond the town of Marrero. Across the road from this institution is Madonna Manor, which cares for younger boys. Both of these charitable homes are the work of the Right Rev. Monsignor Peter M. H. Wynhoven, founder and director. (107) The main units of Hope Haven were dedicated in 1927. They consist of modern buildings in the Spanish mission style. Here neglected boys of all creeds and from any part of Louisiana, are given a home and educated in some skilled work which will make them self-supporting. In order that each boy may be given instruction in the trade or pursuit for which he is best fitted, a special vocational department is maintained. (108) The Madonna Manor unit was opened on September 6, 1932. Every effort has been made to create a home where the children will be made to forget they are orphans, and where they may have the opportunity of developing to the highest degree their personalities and talents. (109) The police jury of Jefferson Parish has contributed to Hope Haven since 1918. (110) In 1923 they appropriated the sum of \$ 1,500 for the support of parish orphans, and in 1930 signed a contract with Hope Haven by the terms of which the farm would receive five dollars a month for each boy sent them by the parish. The contract was renewed in 1933, and has since worked to the satisfaction of both parties. (111)

## SCHOOLS

There have been schools in Jefferson Parish since the creation of the parish, but they were not free public schools in the true sense. Although open to all white pupils without distinction to class, they charged tuition to those who could pay. Each school, however, provided for a limited number of indigent pupils, whose tuition was paid out of the state appropriation for education. (112) It is a matter of record that true "free public schools" were planned by the Jefferson Parish school authorities in 1841, four years before they existed in any other part of the state. (113) In that year, the council of the City of Lafayette passed an ordinance for the establishment and organization of the first public school "for the gratuitous education of children of both sexes to which all children of proper age of white resident parents shall be admitted." (114) From that time on, the schools of the parish advanced, and now rank equally well with any other schools in the state. In the past thirteen years over a million dollars has been spent for school buildings. At present there are six senior high schools, five of which have elementary departments; one junior high school and nineteen elementary schools. (115) Recently a bond issue was floated to build \$ 1,600,000 worth of schools, stadia and gymnasiums and to improve





school grounds. (116)

Among the private schools is the Metairie Park Country Day School, which fosters progressive education. It was launched by a group of co-operating parents of New Orleans, in September, 1929. Situated in Jefferson Parish, adjoining New Orleans, on Park Road at Duplessis Street, Metairie, it is far enough away from the congestion and noise of the city to be in a distinctive atmosphere of its own, yet near enough for the children to be taken back and forth every day in busses. They thus have the advantage of a boarding school and of home life at the same time. When the school was opened, it took children only through the sixth grade. Now it takes them through high school. The present enrollment is about 170. (117) This school is so conducted that home work is not necessary except for students in the high school.

#### CITIES AND TOWNS

Several of the towns of Jefferson are connected with historical events and colorful legends. Kenner, incorporated in 1873, (118) is situated on the east bank of the Mississippi River twelve miles above New Orleans, and is one of the oldest towns in the parish. In the days before the Civil War, when sugar culture was important, this section was known as "Cannes Brules" or "Burnt Cane." On a map dated 1858, Coleman's Mill is shown, where cannon and cannon balls were made during the Civil War. This foundry was located just off the present Williams Street, in a section since taken into the river. Two of the largest sugar plantations were owned by the Kenner brothers. When sugar became no longer profitable, the owners divided their plantation into lots, which they sold to settlers. The first settlers were of Irish and German descent, but later many Italian families settled here. It was during this period that extensive truck farming came into prominence. Served by three railroads and two paved highways, Kenner is able to ship vegetables to all parts of the country. (119)

Two miles below Kenner is Harahan, incorporated in 1920 by proclamation. Located in the heart of a fertile area suitable for truck farming, dairying, stock and poultry raising, this section annually supplies New Orleans with a large amount of farm produce. Harahan's proximity to New Orleans, combined with the lower cost of living, makes it an ideal place for suburban homes. (120)

Metairie, from a French word meaning "farm", is situated immediately west of and adjacent to the City of New Orleans, comprising an area of about six square miles. Metairie Bayou, once a navigable stream alongside the present Metairie Road, by overflowing its banks with each high water period many years past, caused silt to settle on each side of the bayou, thereby building up the so-called "Ridge", which is several feet higher than the greater portion of the residential area of New Orleans. It is only natural that those seeking larger homesites, easily accessible to the business section, became interested in locating in Metairie, now but fifteen minutes drive by auto to the business center of the city. (121) Just across Metairie Bayou from the road is Metairie Cemetery, reputed the finest in the entire world. It is located at the junction of Metairie Road and





Pontchartrain Boulevard. In the early days, this was the old Metairie Race Track, where many famous races were run in the ante-bellum period. (122)

Today, many residential areas have been developed, rapidly attracting Orleanians to this section. Metairie averages five to ten degrees cooler than the City of New Orleans during the summer months. Metairie Club Gardens, a residential park, surrounded by the Metairie Golf Course, has a minimum restriction of \$ 15,000 for each home built therein, and is rapidly building up with magnificent residences on beautifully landscaped grounds. It is one of the showplaces of New Orleans. Many other restricted residential areas have been developed, such as Vincent Place, Oak Ridge Park, Farnham Place, Crestmont Park, Livingston Place, Beverly Knoll, Brockenbraugh Court, Bonnabel Place, Athania Place, Elmeer Place, Forest Hills, Ridgeway Terrace and Metairie Terrace. Metairie and the Colonial Golf Clubs offer year round sport for the golfer. Although residents of Metairie enjoy free delivery service from merchants of New Orleans, it has its own shopping center and grocery stores, bakeries, hardware stores, drug stores and a neighborhood picture theatre. A ten minute bus schedule furnishes ample transportation facilities. Two public schools, several parochial and private schools provide educational facilities. (123)

Gretna, the parish seat, was settled in the eighteenth century by a group of German immigrants who called their village Mechanickham. John Baptiste D'Etrehen (now spelled Destrehen) a large land owner, hired some of these settlers to dig a canal for him from the Mississippi River to Little Bayou Barataria, a distance of five miles. The canal was completed in 1741 and named in his honor. (124) Passing from father to son, it became the property of Nicholas Noel Destrehen, of Jefferson Parish. When he died in 1848, the canal remained under the control of his daughter, Mrs. Louise Destrehen Harvey. (125) Following the Civil War the name was changed to Harvey's Canal. It remained in the Harvey family until 1924, when it was purchased by the United States as a part of the Intracoastal Waterways System. Today the canal is equipped with locks, and connects with waterways from Harvey to Galveston and Houston, Texas. (126)

The evolution of the name of the settlement from Mechanickham to Gretna involves a bit of romantic legend. About a hundred years ago an old Creole justice of the peace lived there, who gained the reputation of performing marriages at any time of the day or night. The frequency with which run-away couples made use of his services gave rise to the expression, "They went to Gretna," from the town of Gretna Green, just across the border of Scotland, well known in England for the same reason. (127)

Gretna was incorporated as a town by governor's proclamation on August 20, 1913, (128) and in 1916 was incorporated as a city by the legislature. (129) In 1930 the city had a population of 9,584. Transportation facilities are excellent. It is connected with New Orleans by two ferries, it marks the terminus of the Texas and Pacific and Missouri-Pacific Lines, and is traversed by the Southern Pacific and the New Orleans and Lower Coast Lines. Concrete highways connect the





city with all parts of the state, the Intracoastal Canal is only one mile away; and extensive river frontage provides docking facilities for ocean liners. The city has a modern filtration plant and sewerage system, and a municipal garbage incinerator. There are churches of many denominations, and numerous public and parochial schools, including one of the largest and finest high schools in the state. Gretna operates under the aldermanic form of government, having a mayor and a board of aldermen. (130)

At McDonoghville, now incorporated as a part of Gretna, is the cemetery established by John McDonogh for his slaves. McDonogh, born in Baltimore, came to New Orleans in 1800 and amassed a large fortune from sugar planting, brick manufacturing and real estate. In 1817 he left New Orleans and moved across to one of his plantations on the west side of the river, where later the town of McDonoghville grew up. When he died in 1850, he was the first white man to be buried in the cemetery set aside for his slaves. Subsequently other white people were interred there, but while Edward Thornton, a former slave of McDonogh, served as caretaker, there was no separation of the graves of negroes and whites. In 1891 Mayor Shakespeare of New Orleans ordered their separation, and today the negroes all lie at the southern end of the cemetery. Some years after McDonogh's death, his remains were moved to Baltimore in deference to a request in his will. Known during his life as a miser and an eccentric, McDonogh is remembered for his philanthropic deeds. He allowed his slaves to buy their freedom from him by a system of extra work, and at the end of fourteen years sent them to the colony in Liberia. His scheme was a complex device in which kindness and acquisitiveness each played a part. Although he really wished to help his slaves, he nevertheless expected to and did profit by the transaction. According to his own admission, he was able to buy two new slaves for the price that one paid him for liberation. (131) At his death, it was discovered that he had left a million dollars to the City of New Orleans for educational purposes. Thirty-six schools were erected, all bearing his name. Today his memory is honored by the school children of New Orleans, who on the first Friday of each May place flowers about his statue in Lafayette square. The school children of McDonoghville honor him by placing flowers on the empty tomb he once occupied.

Westwego, located on the river above Gretna, was incorporated on January 18, 1919, by proclamation of Governor R. G. Pleasant. At that time the entire population numbered only 1,583. Today it is a town of nearly 5,000 inhabitants. The streets are paved, and sub-surface drainage and curbing have been installed on all the main thoroughfares. Ferry service and the Huey P. Long Bridge put the town within twenty minutes of the shopping district of New Orleans. (132)

#### BARATARIA SECTION

Barataria is one of the most picturesque sections of Louisiana. Originally the name applied only to Barataria Isle, but now includes the whole lower part of Jefferson Parish. Going south from New Orleans, the name is encountered at several points. First, there is the village of Barataria, about sixteen miles south of the city, which in 1930 had a population of 650. Then follows Bayou Barataria, Barataria Bay and Barataria Lighthouse on Grande Terre Island. During the first quarter





of the nineteenth century these islands and bayous formed the rendezvous of a band of smugglers and pirates led by Jean and Pierre Lafitte. They had a fortified camp on Grande Terre Island and another at Lafitte, from which points they preyed upon shipping in the Gulf of Mexico. (133) When in 1814 New Orleans was threatened by British forces, Jean Lafitte was offered a complete pardon, command of a British frigate and 30,000 dollars in gold if he would join the English against the United States. His refusal, followed by his gallant conduct in the Battle of New Orleans, won for them all the designation of "patriots". There is a legend among the natives of Barataria that in the Lafitte Cemetery on Bayou des Oies, five miles from Lafitte, not only Jean Lafitte, but John Paul Jones and Napoleon Bonaparte all lie buried. (134)

Cheniere Caminada, an island in the Gulf, probably perpetuates the memory of Francisco Caminada, who owned land at the site of the Tchoupitoulas Indian settlement above New Orleans, as well as a tract of land below the city. (135) In 1842 a sufficient number of people lived there to warrant representation on the police jury. Joseph Cossa was chosen as a member from Cheniere Caminada. He accepted the appointment with the proviso that he should not be expected to attend all the sessions of the body, since his district was seventy-five miles from the courthouse at Lafayette. He promised, however, to be present whenever necessary, and asked the police jury to treat him with the same indulgence it had extended to his predecessor, Mr. Fauchier, who had not attended a single meeting. (136) On October 1, 1893, a terrific storm struck the coast of Louisiana, which because of its center of violence on the island, has been called the "Cheniere Caminada Storm". The president of the Jefferson police jury, L. H. Marrero, advised that body to appropriate the sum of \$500 for the relief of storm victims. He reported that from the best information he could gather, some three hundred houses were blown down, and that something like 1200 out of a population of 1800 had lost their lives. The sum asked for was appropriated. (137) Some of the survivors took refuge at what is now Westwego. Pablo Sala, a resident of the town, donated to each of the survivors who wished to locate there a plot of ground, and also provided a cemetery for them. For a while the settlement was known as Salaville. Later the name was changed to Westwego, and Pablo Sala is remembered today only in Sala Avenue, the main street of the town. (138)

In 1834 a tract of land on Grande Terre, in the lower end of Barataria Bay, was purchased by the state from Etienne de Gruy and ceded to the United States as a fort site. (139) The legislature decreed that jurisdiction over the land would revert to the state if the fort were allowed to fall into decay, or be rendered useless for a period of seven years. (140) The fort was completed in 1850 and named Fort Livingston. It was not garrisoned after the Civil War, and was partially destroyed in the Cheniere Caminada hurricane of 1893. Today only the ruins of the brick walls and the rusted cannon remain. (141)

An event of great local interest is the annual pirogue race, held at Lafitte each May. Inaugurated in 1936, the race serves to perpetuate the traditions surrounding this Indian mode of travel, and to pay tribute to the skill of the men of the bayous in the building and hand-





ling of these little craft. The contest is staged on Bayou Barataria, from Kammer's Store to Fleming Park, a racing course of four and seven-tenths miles. Here hundreds of people gather to watch the race, in which from seventy-five to a hundred entrants vie with each other for first place. For four years now the record, thirty-five minutes and nine seconds, has been held by young Adam Vincent Billiot, a citizen of Jefferson Parish. (142)

At the end of the parish lies Grand Isle, with the waters of Rigaud Bay on one side, and the rolling surf of the Gulf of Mexico on the other. It is said that this island was a stronghold of Jean Lafitte, and that many of the inhabitants today are descendants of his band. Whatever their ancestry, the people speak a French patois. They farm enough to produce food, and fish as a means of livelihood. As a sideline to fishing, they act as guides for visitors on fishing expeditions. Each year, late in August, Grand Isle attracts many contestants to the annual Tarpon Rodeo. The first rodeo was sponsored in 1927 by John C. Donovan, a fishing enthusiast of New Orleans. Since that time the fame of the event has spread until at present some of the best fishermen from the Gulf Coast, and even the East Coast and the Great Lakes, take part in the sport. (143)

#### SUMMARY

The keynote of Jefferson Parish is Progress. In spite of the setback occasioned by the annexation of its earliest towns, the parish has gone forward in population, industry and wealth, because it has the sound basic materials from which these things emanate. Nature has been kind to Jefferson. There is wealth in her soil, capable of almost unlimited expansion. Beneath the ground "black gold" in quantities yet untouched awaits future development. Even the water and marshes contribute their share to the general prosperity. The climate is sub-tropical, with few extremes of either heat or cold. There is space for industry, for homes and gardens and for children. There are thriving towns alive with the hum of business, immense plants which furnish wealth and employment to the parish and its people, quaint villages, the unforgettable loveliness of winding bayous, and the long roll of surf against its southern shores. For everything produced in the parish there are oceangoing ships and fast trains to reach the markets of the world, while next door half a million people offer a ready market for the things Jefferson has to sell. In addition to all this, the parish has an industrious, wide-awake people, and a sound business government. It is not only a good place to live now, but one which furnishes a guarantee of continued progress.



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